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ABSTRACT

This article discusses language planning in Israel, and specifically the activities of the Academy of the Hebrew Language. Its development from the original Hebrew Language Council is traced, as well as its membership which is made up of leading Hebrew scholars and writers. The aims of the Academy were basically three: (1) to assemble and carry out research into the Hebrew vocabulary of all periods; (2) to carry out research into the structure of the Hebrew language, in accordance with its original spirit, its requirements and possibilities in all theoretical and practical fields, its vocabulary, grammar, script, spelling, and transliterations. The Academy is required to publish its decisions at least bi-annually and to report on work in progress. A list of the Academy's publications include records of the Academy, a quarterly and monthly journal, a series of monthly illustrated posters, linguistic studies, and dictionaries and terminological lists for experts and teachers. A more detailed discussion of the work done in the areas of word study, word coining and word analysis and related areas is provided. Future priorities of the Academy will include studies of style and syntax. (Author/CLK)

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Language Planning In Israel:

The Academy Of The Hebrew Language

By JACK FELLMAN*

The Academy of the Hebrew Language (Ha-Agademia La-Lashon Ha-Ivrit), situated on the Campus of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, officially came into existence on August 27, 1953. However, for all intents and purposes, the Academy was merely the legal inheritor of another institution which had come into existence 63 years earlier, the Hebrew Language Council (Waad Ha-Lashon Ha-Ivrit). The more modest Council was created by "the father of Modern Hebrew" Eliezer Ben Yehuda in December, 1890 as a step in furthering the Hebrew revival[1]. A full-fledged official Hebrew Academy, however, was still Ben Yehuda's ultimate dream, and with the establishment of the State of Israel in May, 1948, the time was felt finally appropriate to realize this. On January 3, 1949, members of the Language Council met with representatives of the Provisional Government, the World Zionist Organization and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and presented a proposal for converting the Council into an Academy. It was ultimately agreed that the Academy would be the legal continuation of the Council, and that the Council would automatically disband upon the first meeting of the Academy. The Council in the meantime would select eight of its members to be the first members of the future Academy. In addition to these eight, two delegates chosen by the government, two chosen by the Zionist Organization, and one chosen by the University would together constitute a nominating committee which would select fifteen other members of the future Academy, thus bringing the total Academy membership to twenty-three. These twenty-three members would have to be Israeli citizens. In addition, five further members were to be selected among candidates not residing in Israel (in order to give World Jewry some voice in forming the Hebrew language), and five further advisory members were also to be chosen. All other Council members not covered by the above automatically also became advisory members of the Academy.

These preliminaries completed, the Government invited the Council to frame a legal paper on the future Academy. After three meetings with Government representatives, a draft was drawn and in due course brought before the Israeli Parliament (the Knesset) by the Minister of Education. On August 27, 1953, five years after the State of Israel had come into being, this draft became law. The law officially created in Jerusalem a "Supreme Hebrew Language Institute" sponsored by the Government and empowered "to guide the development of the Hebrew language on the basis of research into its different periods and branches . . . Decisions of the Institute as to matters of grammar, spelling, terminology or transliteration . . . shall be adhered to by educational and scientific institutes, by the government and its departments and agencies, and by the local authorities."[2]

On internal matters and makeup, the Parliament left the Institute free to proceed as it saw fit. After extensive discussions, the decisions of the Institute on such internal matters were presented to the Parliament and similarly became law on July 23, 1954. The 'Supreme Hebrew Language Institute' was now named the 'Academy of the Hebrew Language' with a membership of twenty-three drawn from leading Hebrew scholars and writers. The self-proclaimed aims of the Academy were as follows:

(1) "To assemble and to carry out research into the Hebrew vocabulary of all periods;
(2) To carry out research into the structure of the Hebrew language, its history and its evolution;
(3) To direct the development of the Hebrew language, in accordance with its original spirit, its requirements and possibilities in all theoretical and practical fields, its vocabulary, grammar, script, spelling, and transliteration."[3]

(Continued on page 6)

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Further, according to the above Laws, the Academy was required to publish at least bi-annually any of its decisions and to report on work in progress. Indeed, in order to spread the results of its work, the Academy publishes several types of reports and informational materials, as follows:

(1) Zikhronot Ha-Agademia La-Lashon Ha-Ivrit [The Records of the Academy of the Hebrew Language], published annually since 1953 and containing Academy decisions on language matters ratified during the bi-monthly Plenum sessions, as well as any other relevant material (such as scientific lectures given by Academy members at said meetings).

(2) Leshonenu [Our Language], a quarterly journal published since 1929 for the study of the Hebrew language and cognate subjects, especially directed to academicians in Semitics and Ancient Near Eastern Studies.

(3) Leshonenu La-Am [Our Language for the People], a monthly journal published since 1945 on Hebrew language matters of more general interest, especially directed to teachers of Hebrew, students, and the educated and interested layman.

(4) Lemad Leshonekha [Learn Your Language], a series of monthly illustrated posters, published since 1963, depicting language innovations ratified by the Academy and directed to the general public. The posters are especially suitable for displaying on bulletin boards in schools, offices, and places of employment. Reproductions of these posters are also intermittently published in the daily press.

(5) Mehqarim Leshoniim [Linguistic Studies], published intermittently since 1936 by various authors on specialized topics connected with the Hebrew language and sponsored in their work, either wholly or in part, by the Academy.

(6) Dictionaries and Terminological Lists aimed especially for immediate use by experts and teachers in particular lexical fields and for ultimate use by wide sectors of the general public. On the average one 75-page dictionary and two-three 10-page terminology lists are published annually. In the past decade and a half several terminologies have appeared in the realms of law and politics, the armed forces, aeronautics, electronics and general technology.

Indeed, it is in the realm of terminology—word study, word coining and word analysis—and in the related problems of spelling, pronunciation, inflection, punctuation and transliteration that the Academy has done its most intensive and fruitful work. Such attention to words cannot but be otherwise in the case of Hebrew, a language but recently revived as a modern, spoken tongue. Indeed, unlike most developing languages, the word shortage in Hebrew is twofold. Not only are words missing in the field of modern technology and civilization—a commonplace in developing languages—but words are also missing in the everyday areas of the home, the workshop and the marketplace, a fact unparalleled in any other language. Indeed, an ongoing project begun by the Academy in 1959, the Historical Dictionary of the Hebrew Language, is attempting to trace and list every word which *ever* appeared in Hebrew, thus ultimately pinpointing exactly where the language needs lexical filling and expansion. So much, then, with regard to the lexicon of the language. As time goes on, however, the Academy will have to turn more and more to problems of style and syntax if it is ultimately to fulfill its historic role as "guardian of the Hebrew language." □

NOTES

1. On Ben Yehuda and his role in the revival, cf. most recently Jack Fellman, *The Revival of a Classical Tongue. Eliezer Ben Yehuda and the Modern Hebrew Language*, Mouton Studies in the Sociology of Language 6, Joshua A. Fishman (ed.), 1973.
2. The Supreme Hebrew Language Institute Law, *Reshumot* (August 27, 1953), Section 10.
3. Regulations of the Academy of the Hebrew Language, *Reshumot* 465 (July 23, 1954), Section 10, p. 1162.

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Some Observations on Language Planning

(continued from page 4)

Soviet language planners regard their experience in this field during the last six decades as a unique source of information for their colleagues abroad. Regardless whether Soviet language policy is seen as a model for language policy in a given country, the diverse and rich storehouse of data that the Soviet language planning effort has generated ought to be used to inform linguistic policy elsewhere, whenever relevant. It will be to the benefit of language planning and language planners everywhere in the exchange of information between Soviet and other practitioners of this field can continue to grow. □